

# MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 12, 2017

## CAFA DISTINGUISHED ACADEMIC AWARDS, 2017

(EDMONTON) – The Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA), the provincial organization representing academic staff associations at the University of Alberta, the University of Lethbridge, the University of Calgary, and Athabasca University, is pleased to announce the recipients of the CAFA Distinguished Academic Awards for 2017.

The CAFA Distinguished Academic Awards recognize academic staff members at Alberta's four research universities, who through their research and/or other scholarly, creative or professional activities have made an outstanding contribution to the wider community beyond the university.

The recipient of the **2017 CAFA Distinguished Academic Award** is **Dr. Colleen Cassady St. Clair**, Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Alberta, in recognition of her influential research and committed public advocacy in the fields of conservation biology and behavioural ecology.

**Dr. Lianne Lefsrud**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Chemical and Materials Engineering, University of Alberta, has been chosen to receive the **2017 CAFA Distinguished Academic Early Career Award** for her innovative, interdisciplinary research in the field of risk management.

“Through the annual CAFA Distinguished Academic Awards the academic staff associations of Alberta's four research-intensive universities celebrate the significant contributions made by their members, through research, scholarly, and creative activities, to the community beyond the academy,” notes Dr. Paul Rogers, President of CAFA. “On behalf of CAFA, I extend hearty congratulations to Dr. Colleen Cassady St. Clair and Dr. Lianne Lefsrud, the thoroughly deserving recipients of our awards for 2017.”

The 2017 CAFA Distinguished Academic Awards will be presented at a banquet at the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton, on **Thursday, September 14, 2016**.

**For further information on the work of this year's Award recipients, please see the attached backgrounders.**

### Media Enquiries:

**John Nicholls, Executive Director, CAFA**

Tel (780) 492-5630 e-mail [john.nicholls@ualberta.ca](mailto:john.nicholls@ualberta.ca)

<http://www.ualberta.ca/cafa>

**BACKGROUNDER**  
**CAFA DISTINGUISHED ACADEMIC AWARD 2017**  
**DR. COLLEEN CASSADY ST. CLAIR**

Dr. Colleen Cassady St. Clair, Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Alberta, has been chosen to receive the 2017 CAFA Distinguished Academic Award. The award recognizes Dr. St. Clair's outstanding contributions to the wider community beyond the academy through her influential research in the fields of conservation biology and behavioural ecology.

In the course of her academic career, Dr. Colleen Cassady St. Clair has established a well-deserved reputation both for the quality of her scholarship, as evidenced by her impressive publication record, and for her public role as a committed advocate for science-based solutions to problems arising where humans and wildlife come into conflict. As a colleague writes, "Colleen's dedication to making impactful contributions beyond the university is not an add-on to her research, but instead it's a core component of how she has always practiced her science."

Dr. St. Clair's groundbreaking work on a detection and deterrent system for birds landing on tailings ponds in the oil sands, for example, led to an invitation from Alberta Environment to synthesize bird protection standards for the industry. Her expert testimony in the trial in *R v Syncrude* (2010) resulted in an invitation to lead the *Research on Avian Protection Project* (RAPP), as part of a creative sentence imposed by the court (and recommended by both the Crown and defence!). This multi-year project resulted in a standardized monitoring program and the first census of landings and mortality of birds on tailings ponds, which has fundamentally altered our understanding of the problem and how it should be addressed. In a subsequent synthesis developed at the invitation of the Alberta Energy Regulator, Dr. St. Clair has shown how better bird protection and social license might be achieved at lower cost and with less environmental impact.

In 2009, Dr. St. Clair established the *Edmonton Urban Coyote Project*, in collaboration with the City of Edmonton, to better understand human-coyote conflict, and to promote co-existence, in the urban setting. The project involves innovative field-based research and public outreach, including a website that features an interactive tool for recording coyote sightings and encounters, which to date has produced thousands of reports that are feeding back into further research. Dr. St. Clair and her team have published their findings, for example, on the role urban compost plays in coyote attraction, disease and conflict behavior, and are about to initiate a community-based stewardship program designed to discourage daytime coyote activity and reduce public demands for lethal coyote management.

Most recently, Dr. St. Clair has been receiving media attention for her leadership in a lengthy collaborative research project seeking to understand the causes of train collisions with grizzly bears and to find ways to address this growing problem. Critical to the success of the project has been the development of a close working

relationship between the academic researchers, Canadian Pacific, and Parks Canada, which has facilitated collection of data both from the CP right-of-way and from GPS collars attached to the bears. In addition to numerous scientific papers, the project has led to the development of prototypes for a train-based warning system that should reduce grizzly deaths on the railway tracks. Moreover, as Dr. St. Clair notes, she and her team “are synthesizing our more specific research results in a predictive model of mortality risk to support mitigation action [...] and use by others to reduce train-caused mortality for other species and locations.”

**BACKGROUNDER**  
**CAFA DISTINGUISHED ACADEMIC EARLY CAREER AWARD, 2017**  
**DR. LIANNE M. LEFSRUD**

Dr. Lianne M. Lefsrud, Assistant Professor in the Department of Chemical and Materials Engineering, University of Alberta, has been chosen to receive the 2017 CAFA Distinguished Academic Early Career Award. The Award recognizes Dr. Lefsrud's outstanding contributions to the wider community beyond the academy through her innovative, interdisciplinary research in the field of risk management.

In the words of a colleague, "Lianne is motivated to make the world a better place by better 'seeing' and managing the risks facing us as a society through her industry and academic experience." She is still at a very early stage of her academic career: she obtained her Ph.D. in Strategic Management and Organization from the Alberta School of Business in 2014, spent two years at University of Michigan at the Erb Institute for Global Sustainable Enterprise, and took up her appointment as Assistant Professor of Engineering Safety and Risk Management in the U of A Engineering Faculty in May 2015. Dr. Lefsrud has already made important contributions in four major areas of public interest: workplace safety, sustainable resource development, climate change, and workplace diversity.

Prior to joining the U of A, Dr. Lefsrud, who is a Professional Engineer, worked with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA) on regulatory issues, and it was this experience that led her to the study of organizational theory and methods which now inform her 'problem driven' approach to risk management, broadly understood. Her research on workplace safety in the Alberta construction industry, for example, examines the interaction of the different 'safety cultures' among different types of construction organizations (owners, contractors, and subcontractors) across the province. As part of a major safety initiative, Dr. Lefsrud's work is assisting the industry in setting benchmarks for managing safety risks, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and developing practical strategies for continuous improvement of its safety cultures.

In her Ph.D. dissertation, Dr. Lefsrud employed 'network analysis to visualize evolving vocabularies and rhetorical contestations of meaning' with respect to regulatory hearings and media coverage of the Alberta oil sands, over the period 1960 – 2010. Borrowing insights from a range of disciplines including sociology and experimental psychology, she has gone on to produce an impressive body of research on the framing of public discourse around concepts such as 'legitimacy' and 'social license to operate' in risk assessment of natural resource development. Her work, which throws new light on the highly emotive 'dirty oil, ethical oil' debate, for example, provides a foundation for the development of a 'science-based' understanding of the disconnect between the language used, respectively, by industry and by environmental activists, with the aim of promoting a more productive public dialogue on issues like sustainability and climate change.

Dr. Lefsrud's research findings, which have been published in leading peer-reviewed academic journals and delivered at scholarly conferences, have also been the subject of numerous influential presentations to government, corporate decision-makers, professional associations, and the general public, and have been widely disseminated through the media. To reach the broadest audience, Dr. Lefsrud has recorded a popular TEDx talk, entitled "Ugly Duckling or Golden Goose: Reimagining Resources," which is available to be viewed on YouTube.

In addition to her academic research, Dr. Lefsrud has been an active proponent of diversity initiatives for the advancement of women in engineering and science. She has held executive positions in organizations working to that end, including the Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology (CCWESTT), and is co-chairing the biennial CCWESTT Conference with Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour, to be held in Edmonton. May 31 – June 2, 2018, [www.cctestt2018.com](http://www.cctestt2018.com). Dr. Lefsrud also serves as advisor to a student-led task force on "Diversity in Engineering."